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REMARKS

Claims 1 and 4, as amended, remain herein.

Claim 1 has been amended to recite the subject matter of claim 2, and claims 2 and 3 have been cancelled without prejudice or disclaimer. Claim 4 has been rewritten in independent form and to recite all of the limitations of the apparatus recited in claim 1. Additional, minor editorial changes have been made in claims 1 and 4.

The specification, page 6, lines 11 and 12, has been amended to recite "cassette mechanism, including portions of the flow regulation portion 3 for contacting the batch material." This is consistent with next lines 12-13, which describe the aforementioned as "i.e., only the inner member 32 or the end member 34 in the embodiments shown in Figs. 3b-3d can be exchanged." (Exchangeable member 33 is described earlier.) Figs. 3b-3d show the cassette mechanism comprising removable members 32-34, which can be detached and attached, as the only members that come in contact with the material being extruded therethrough.

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1. Objections were stated to the drawings. Submitted herewith are copies of Figures 3 and 4 revised to include the Prior Art legend. Withdrawal of the objection to the drawings is respectfully requested.

3. Objections were stated to the specification. Page 6, numbered paragraph 15, has been reworded, thus mooted those objections.

4. Claims 1-4 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over applicants' admitted prior art (AAPA) and Ziegler U.S. Patent 4,770,624. Claims 2 and 3 have been cancelled, thereby mooted their rejection, and claim 1 has been amended to recite the subject matter of former claim 2.

The presently claimed ceramic honeycomb extrusion apparatus and method for using such apparatus include a flow regulation portion having a cassette mechanism including a detachable inner portion for regulating flow of material being extruded therethrough. This arrangement and corresponding method for using this arrangement are nowhere disclosed or suggested in the cited reference.

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The flow regulation portion having a cassette mechanism including a detachable inner portion for regulating flow of material being extruded therethrough is described in the specification at page 3, paragraph 0008, indicating the benefit of such removable portions for cleaning and replacement of worn parts. Paragraph 0003 describes such cleaning problems experienced in prior art regulation portions.

The Office Action admits that the AAPA does not teach the flow regulation portion including elements (1)-(4) or the cassette mechanism recited in applicants' claims 1 and 4, and cites Ziegler '624 as allegedly teaching same. The Office Action argues that Ziegler '624 allegedly discloses choke sleeve 70 threaded at 72 in engagement with rotatable collar 74 within extension 76 of extruder tube 64, wherein an inner portion of sleeve 70 and rotatable collar 74 allegedly can be attached or detached. However, Ziegler '624 does not disclose collar 70 as being detachable from extension 76 of extruder tube 64. While Ziegler '624, column 3, lines 60-63, describes collar 70 as being rotatable for "axially short distances as necessary to adjust the size of the flow passage", Ziegler '624 does not disclose collar 70 to be attachable to or

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detachable from extension 76 or any other portion. Rotatable collar 74 threads on/off choke sleeve 70, but sleeve 70 is not disclosed to be removable from extension 76. Accordingly, contrary to the Office Action, sleeve 70 and rotatable collar 74 are not detachable inner portions of a cassette mechanism, as recited in applicants' claims 1 and 4.

Also, contrary to the Office Action, Ziegler '624 does not show structure corresponding to foreign substance removal portion 12 shown in applicants' Fig. 1. The Office Action does not mention applicants' foreign substance removal element, and instead identifies the outlet shape of the diameter expanding portion adjacent reference numeral 66''' as equal to an inlet shape of the output portion of mandrel 58, without reference to any removal element.

For the foregoing reasons, neither AAPA nor Ziegler '624 contains any teaching, suggestion, reason, motivation or incentive that would have led one of ordinary skill in the art to applicants' claimed invention. Nor is there any disclosure or teaching in either of these references that would have suggested the desirability of combining any portions thereof effectively to anticipate or suggest applicants' presently

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claimed invention. Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of this rejection are respectfully requested.

5. Claims 1 and 4 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Applicants' Admitted Prior Art (AAPA) and Heilmayr U.S. Patent 4,015,925. The Office Action admits that the AAPA does not disclose the flow regulation portion including a diameter reducing portion, a cylinder portion and a diameter expanding portion as recited in claims 1 and 4, and cites Heilmayr '925 as allegedly teaching same. However, Heilmayr '925 does not teach or suggest a flow regulation portion including a detachable cassette having an inner portion for contacting extrusion material, which can be attached or detached from the flow regulation portion, as recited in applicants' claim 1.

Also contrary to the Office Action, Heilmayr '925 does not show structure corresponding to foreign substance removal portion 12 shown in applicants' Fig. 1. The Office Action does not mention applicants' foreign substance removal element but instead, identifies the outlet shape of the diameter expanding portion 27 as equal to an inlet shape of the output portion of portion T, without reference to any removal element.

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For the foregoing reasons, neither the AAPA nor Heilmayr '925 contains any teaching, suggestion, reason, motivation or incentive that would have led one of ordinary skill in the art to applicants' claimed invention. Nor is there any disclosure or teaching in either of these references that would have suggested the desirability of combining any portions thereof effectively to anticipate or suggest applicants' presently claimed invention. Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of this rejection are respectfully requested.

All claims 1 and 4 are now proper in form and patentably distinguished over all grounds of rejection stated in the Office Action. Accordingly, allowance of all claims 1 and 4 is respectfully requested.

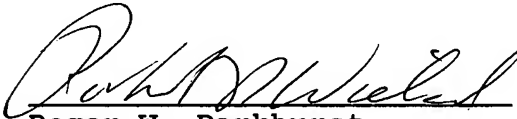
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Should the Examiner deem that any further action by the applicants would be desirable to place this application in even better condition for issue, the Examiner is requested to telephone applicants' undersigned representatives.

Respectfully submitted,

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July 12, 2004
Date


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RWP:RNW/mhs/ch

Attachments: 1 annotated sheet showing changes Figs. 4 and 5
1 replacement sheet Figs. 4 and 5

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FIG. 4 PRIOR ART

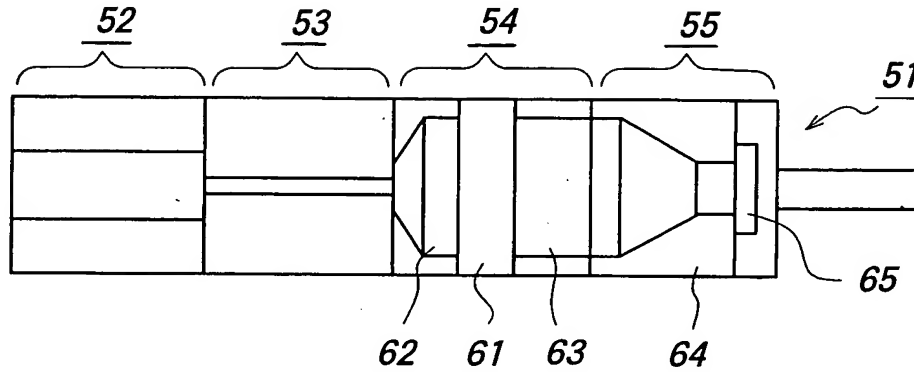


FIG. 5 PRIOR ART

